

# Comparative Analysis of Planning as an Administrative Task Performance by Heads in Rural and Urban Second Cycle Schools in Ghana

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## ABSTRACT

Effective planning is essential in the smooth running of second cycle schools in Ghana. The study examined planning as an administrative task performance by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana. The study sought to examine whether there is a significant difference in the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana. A descriptive survey was employed as the study design. The study was targeted to 519 public second cycle schools in Ghana. Using a stratified and census sampling technique, 1085 assistant heads, heads of department and teachers were selected from 155 public second cycle schools to participated in the study. A questionnaire was used as the main instrument where respondents were required to show their level of agreement to some statements. The overall opinion of respondents revealed that planning, as administrative task performance of headteachers, was to some extent is carried out well. An independent t-test analysis revealed a statistically significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) in the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana. Based on the findings, was recommended that second cycle schools in the rural areas in Ghana should be given equal advantages in terms of good classroom blocks, adequate learning materials, well-equipped science and language laboratories.

**Keywords:** *Planning, Rural schools, Urban school, Planning, School heads, Administrative tasks.*

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### Highlights of this paper

- Administrative task performance of heads in rural schools has been a major concern for stakeholders due to the less support they get from stakeholders.
- The study examined whether planning as an administrative task performance differs concerning heads in rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana.
- The results of this provided evidence to support that planning by heads in urban areas were more effective than heads in rural areas.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Public schools, especially Second Cycle Schools in Ghana are expected to prepare students academically so that they can compete on a global level as well as be held accountable for the huge investments made by both parents and the government. In order to achieve this objective, heads of Second Cycle Schools are appointed to perform certain administrative functions which are intended to oversee the day to day running of the schools (Chitiavi, 2002; Gamage, 2005). The administrative functions of school heads in Ghana during the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the castle schools were established were rigid and authoritative in nature. The rigid and authoritative nature of these administrative functions stemmed from the assumption the missionaries and colonial government had about school administration. It was assumed that the achievement of educational goals of any institution or school depended on the authority of people at the top of the educational administrative structure (Robbins and Hunsaker, 2007).

Headship in the Ghanaian educational system is a well-established position. The Heads are the chief executives who provide administrative leadership by co-ordinating both curricular, and co-curricular programmes, and also responsible for the general administration of the school. It is in this context that Gamage (2005) argues that it is necessary for them to understand where they stand along the leadership continuum in leading, and managing schools toward improving students' achievement. Towards this end, Gamage (2005) explains that heads of schools need to have a clear understanding of the major dimensions of their position.

The administrative functions performed by heads of schools make the difference between success and failure, Lydiah and Nasongo (2009). Lydiah and Nasongo (2009) further explain that effective schools, as well as schools which have reversed the trend of poor performance and declining achievement, have heads who set the pace leading and motivating students and staff to perform to their highest potential. Mudulia (2012) contends that for heads of schools to improve the performance of their students they are required first to improve the management of the schools they head. It was further suggested that heads of schools can improve the performance of their students by setting a clear vision for the schools and communicate this vision to the students, support its achievement by giving instructional leadership, provision of resources and being visible in every part of the institution. The Head who is the driving force behind the school programme needs to proactively mobilize all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, parents and the community towards identifying the schools' strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate decision on the type of follow-up action required to improve teachers' input and students learning outcomes. To do this, the heads need to plan their work (Olagboye, 2004; Adetula, 2005).

The school head is the pivot around which most activities performed in the school revolve, and the person in charge of every detail of the running of the school, be it academic or administrative. The head is involved in making most of the decisions of the school. It is therefore important that the head is a leader, a thinker, a decision-maker, and a good team player. Drew *et al.* (2008) also identified two broad categories of effective leadership practices: interpersonal people skills and engagement (building relationships, inspiring trust, motivating staff and enabling the enhancement and free exercise of their personal attributes) and strategic thinking and operational effectiveness (leading strategic planning and change by prioritising organisational goals, setting a clear vision which is to be communicated and enforced constantly and having access to necessary resources and connections).

Second Cycle School education plays a crucial role in laying the foundation for further education. It is, therefore, imperative that students at this level of education perform well academically. In Ghana, most often when the West African Examination Council (WAEC) releases the results of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), there is a general public outcry about the poor performance of students. Many factors have been identified as responsible for the poor academic performance of students. These include low retention of students in schools, parental role, association with peers, de-motivation (Aremu and Sokan, 2003). Poor academic performance of students is not only distressing to the students and parents but also influences the society in terms of the quality of manpower (Aremu, 2000). The level to which the performance of administrative function impacts on the achievement of educational objectives is, therefore, worth investigating.

Fasasi (2011) in his view, explained planning as a process of decision-making in advance on activities to be performed, workers to be involved and materials to be utilised in an organization. He further explains that planning also implies decision-making on when and how actions are to be taken. In planning, the head looks into the future and makes necessary preparations for the discharge of his responsibilities. The ultimate is to achieve educational objectives effectively. Hence, rational decisions are made on actions to be taken so that resources be judiciously utilised, and maximum benefits attained. Koontz and O'Donnell, (as cited in Mbuso (2000)) confirm that effective planning is the starting point of administrative action.

In Ghana, heads of Second Cycle Schools are usually very active when it comes to stakeholder involvement. This is seen during Board, Staff and PTA meetings to a level where the community is sometimes called upon to support projects for the schools. In support of the findings, Musaazi (as cited in Adu-Gyamfi (2009)) emphasised the need for heads to create a good image of the school by establishing good relationships with the community. This is similar to the assertion of Adu-Gyamfi (2009) that it is imperative for the heads to involve themselves in PTA activities, inform parents and the public about what is happening in the school and let the public know what is expected of them to contribute to the progress of the school.

Oduro (2003) reports that in Ghana it is common practice, especially in rural schools, for headteachers to be left unsupported after the appointment. Most headteachers assume duty with little or no knowledge of their job descriptions, and the result is that headteachers tend to depend principally on experiential learning in carrying out their leadership tasks. According to Jencks and Mayer (1990) neighbourhoods may affect school quality through the inability of the neighbourhood to attract, recruit and retain good teachers or educators.

A study by Fabunmi *et al.* (2007) revealed that the performance of administrative tasks by heads of schools have a significant composite influence on academic performance, but only planning had a significant relative influence on academic performance. It is, therefore, likely that the poor performance in the rural second cycle schools in Ghana can to some extent be attributed to poor planning by the heads in these schools even though it appears that no studies have been conducted to examine the level of planning by heads in rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana. This study, therefore, provides a foundation in examining planning as an administrative task performance by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana.

### *1.1. Research Question*

1. What is the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana?

### *1.2. Hypothesis*

$H_0$ - *There is statistically no significant difference in the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana.*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey was utilised for the study. This design was chosen because it has the advantage of producing a good amount of responses from a wide range of people, provides a meaningful picture of events and seeks to explain people's perceptions and behaviour on the basis of data gathered at a point in time. All Assistant Heads, Heads of Department and teachers with a total population of 34,304 from 519 public second cycle schools in Ghana (Educational Management Information System (Ministry of Education Ghana, 2016) formed the target population.

A stratified proportionate sampling technique was to select 155 schools using rural and urban areas as the strata. Census sampling was then used to select all Assistant Heads, Heads of Department and teachers within the 155 schools which summed to 1085. However, only 963 questionnaires were returned giving a return rate of 88.75%. Out of the 963, 706 (73.3%) were in the urban areas whereas 257 (26.7%) were in the rural areas. This is because the majority of the institutions used for the study were located in the urban areas while a few were located in rural areas. The reason being that because the urban areas are densely populated more schools are built to cater for the large numbers of school-going age group. About 86.8% of the respondents had more than 6 years of teaching experience.

A questionnaire was employed for the study. The questionnaire was on a five-point Likert scale which required respondents to show their level of agreement on some 10-items. The instrument was vetted by two experts to ensure its validity. After that, a pre-test was also conducted in three selected schools in the Central Region. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the method was used to measure the reliability of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of .70.

Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. An independent t-test analysis was used to test the hypothesis using a confidence level of 95%.

## 3. RESULTS

*Research Question:* What is the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana?

To answer the research question 10-items were posed for respondents to show the extent to which they agree or disagree on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree-1, disagree-2, neutral-3, agree-4, strongly agree-5). Therefore a mean greater than 3 indicates a greater proportion of respondents' agreement to the statement and vice versa. Table 1 gives a description of the responses.

Table 1 shows that heads involve staff in identifying problems at the workplace (U=4.41, .68; R=3.34, .80), the head use intuition as a technique in identifying the problems of the institution (U=3.64, 1.05; R=3.16, 1.00) and heads plan co-curriculum activities/sports events, celebrations of National days (U=3.97, .99; R=3.98, .87). Additionally, it was indicated that heads involves subordinates in planning official calendar for the year (U=4.20, .96; R=3.08, 1.05) and prepares schedules for official activities for subordinates (U=4.04, .84; R=3.78, .75). It was also argued that head manages time effectively (U=4.35, .80, R=3.27, .85) and plan effective communication system (U=4.17, .87; R=4.08, .95). Respondents were of the view that their heads involve stakeholders in setting educational goals (U=4.00, .93; R=3.69, .94) and that their head involves staff in identifying the objectives at the workplace (U=4.24, .70; R=3.78, .86).

**Table-1.** Level of planning by Heads in the Rural and Urban Second Cycle Schools in Ghana

Statements	Urban		Rural	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
My head involves staff in identifying the problems at the work place	4.41	.68	3.34	.80
My head use intuition as a technique in identifying the problems of the institution	3.64	1.05	3.16	1.00
My head plan co-curriculum activities/sports events, celebrations of National days	3.97	.99	3.98	.87
My head involves subordinates in planning official calendar for the year	4.20	.96	3.08	1.05
My head prepares schedules for official activities for subordinates	4.04	.84	3.78	.75
My head manages time effectively	4.35	.80	3.27	.85
My head plan effective communication system	4.17	.87	4.08	.95
My head involves stakeholders in setting educational goals	4.00	.93	3.69	.94
My head involves staff in identifying the objectives at the workplace	4.24	.70	3.78	.86

Source: Field Data (2018).

### 3.1. Hypothesis

$H_0$ - There is no difference in the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana.

The hypothesis was tested using the independent t-test with the aim of finding out whether a difference exists in the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban Second Cycle Schools in Ghana. Table 2 provides details on the analysis.

**Table-2.** Independent t-test Analysis of Planning as an Administrative Task Performance of Heads in the Rural and Urban Second Cycle Schools in Ghana.

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value	Remark
Urban	706	4.67	.54	3.84	.000*	Significant
Rural	257	3.98	.66			

\*significant at 0.05.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to investigate whether differences exist in the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban SHS in Ghana. As shown in Table 2, the p-value was .000 ( $p < .05$ ) with a t-value of 3.84. This implies that statistically significant differences exist in the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the level of planning by heads in the rural and urban second cycle schools in Ghana was rejected. The mean values show that heads in urban areas ( $M=4.67$ ,  $SD=.54$ ) have a higher level of planning than those in rural areas ( $M=3.98$ ,  $SD=.66$ ).

## 4. DISCUSSIONS

The overall opinion of respondents in respect to planning according to Table 1 indicates that planning to some extent is going well. Even though generally, planning is going well, the level of planning by heads in the second cycle schools differs with respect to heads in the rural and urban area. Thus, heads in the urban second cycle schools

have higher levels of planning as compared to those in the rural areas. This may be the attribution of the advantage of social amenities at the disposal of heads in the urban settings and also infrastructure in these two categories of schools in many ways differ.

Oduro (2003) reports that in Ghana, it is common practice, especially in rural schools, that heads of schools are left unsupported. Most heads of schools assume duty with little or no knowledge of their job descriptions, and the result is that heads of schools tend to depend principally on experiential learning in carrying out their leadership tasks. This can contribute to the low level of planning by heads in the rural second cycle schools as opined by the respondents.

Lydia and Nasongo (2009) explain that effective schools, as well as schools which have reversed the trend of poor performance and declining achievement, have heads who set the pace leading and motivating students and staff to perform to their highest potential. This shows how important planning as an administrative task performance is. Thus, it is likely that urban second cycle schools would perform better than rural schools.

## 5. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that heads in the urban second cycle schools plan their activities very well as compared to heads in the rural area. This suggests that there would be a smooth running of the second cycle schools in the urban areas as compared to those in the rural areas. This is likely to affect the performance of the school and thus, making urban second cycle schools perform better than rural second cycle schools. It must be emphasised, however, that heads in the urban second cycle schools, sometimes solicit for supports in terms of finances and ideas from parents and teachers. This is because most of the parents in the urban areas are educated and thus, have decent jobs. Since the majority of parents in the urban areas know the importance of education, they are ready and willing to help, in finance and in ideas.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore recommended that second cycle schools in the rural areas in Ghana should be given equal advantages in terms of good classroom blocks, adequate learning materials, well-equipped science and language laboratories so that they can perform academically like their counterparts in the urban settings. Heads in the rural areas should do well to solicit for funds not only from the government but also from some Non-governmental organisations, parents and other agencies for support. This will ensure that planning is still in place when the support from the government is not enough.

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